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NEWS RELEASE

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Smithfield Principal, Westerly Teacher Receive \$25,000 Milken Awards

The principal of the William Winsor School, in Smithfield, and a 4th-grade teacher at the Bradford School, in Westerly, received National Educator Awards from the Milken Family Foundation in surprise ceremonies today (Tuesday, Oct. 22) at their schools.

Susan Caputo, of the Winsor School, and Stephanie Blackburn, of the Bradford School, each received a \$25,000 unrestricted grant. The awards honor educators for “exceptional talent,...outstanding accomplishments and strong long-range potential for professional policy and leadership, and...[their] engaging and inspiring presence.” Milken award winners have been recommended and selected for this award without their knowledge.

Caputo, who lives in Barrington, has been an educator for 29 years. She is known as a principal who leads her school by example. Last year, she taught an algebra class. She has led the school’s shift to standards-based instruction, and she developed a “Math Challenge Program” that involves all the pupils in her school.

“For Susan Caputo, school is student-centered, and every day revolves around students,” said Peter McWalters, commissioner of elementary and secondary education, in presenting her with the Milken Award. “She knows all her students, and she makes comments on each child’s report card before it is sent home. She looks at her school as a community, and she builds a sense of belonging among all the families at William Winsor. She’s a wonderful example of excellence in school leadership.”

Blackburn, who lives in Charlestown, has been a teacher for eight years, specializing in mathematics and in gifted education. She was selected for the Intel Teach-to-the-Future Program, and she has been trained as a master teacher in technology through the Rhode Island Teachers and Technology Initiative.

“Stephanie Blackburn is one of our many examples of excellence in teaching,” McWalters said. “Last year, after she was trained in technology, she taught a 40-hour course to her colleagues at the Bradford School, and 90 percent of the teachers participated! She brings excitement to the classroom, and she is always looking for ways to improve teaching and learning.”

The Milken Family Foundation’s National Educator Awards were established in 1987, and they have been granted in Rhode Island since 1990. There have been 57 recipients in the state.